

**PEACHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING**

Monday, April 13, 2015

Peacham School Cafeteria

UNAPPROVED

PRESENT:

Board: Mark Clough, Adam Kane, Mike Heath

Administration: Principal Judy Ross, CCSU Superintendent Mathew Forest

Clerk to the School Board: Melissa Laurita Kohl

Public: Becky Jensen, Rick Scholes, Rose Nunn, Jen Burchell, Margaret Maclean

Chair of the Board, Mark Clough, called the meeting to order at 5:35P.M.

1. Approval of minutes from March 9th, 2015.

- a. Adam Kane moved to approve the minutes of March 9, 2015. Mike Heath seconded. Adam and Mike voted aye to approve the minutes. Mark Clough voted nay. So approved.**

2. Additions to Agenda

a. Calendar

- i.** Mat went over the changes made to next year's school calendar. There will be one calendar for the entire CCSU. One of the major changes involves monthly professional development days for teachers in order to work on curriculum because CCSU was behind with the common core curriculum. Currently, teachers are removed from classrooms one day a month, making it challenging to find enough subs. Next year, the CCSU doesn't want to pull teachers out of the classroom but they want to continue this work so they have half day/pd days embedded in schedule for monthly professional development (pd). ELO would be available for half days.

- ii. Mark moved to approve the calendar as presented by Mat. Adam seconded. So moved.**

b. Driveway

- i.** The driveway and parking lot belongs to the Peacham School District. The Town of Peacham plows the driveway and lot for free. The parking lot is very muddy and a lot of the stone has been pushed off from plowing.
- ii.** There are other parking lot considerations with grading in relationship to the oil tank (which fills with water). The driveway requires more

substantial work, but the school is interested in having the Town temporarily fix the mud issues in the parking lot.

- iii. **Mark moved to approve to spend up to \$3,000 on the driveway for the Town to do the dirt-work in the driveway. Adam seconded. So moved.**
- iv. Judy wanted to point out one of the items on the Principal's Report as it pertains to the driveway. Judy said that several people told us that the way the tank sits causes water to enter the tank in the spring and in the winter. The school had no heat several times this winter because there was frozen water coming through the fuel line. The tank is in a low spot in the parking lot. The pipes have to be raised up. It's original material in there so it has to be assessed. Mark moves to make an amendment to the motion to stay away from the oil fill area and we will make another motion for the tank.
- v. **Mark moves to investigate the age of the tank, what needs to be done with fill pipes, and the oil separation piece. Mike seconds. So moved.**

3. *Summary of community meeting with legislature/ next steps*

- a. Representative Kitty Toll, Senator Jane Kitchel, and Representative Scott Beck came to a community meeting at the School.
- b. Adam gave a summary of that meeting.
 - i. Representative Kitty Toll and Senator Jane Kitchel wanted to have Scott Beck at the meeting because he is on the House Education Committee. There were about 40 people here. Adam said that he certainly left with a better understanding of how complicated this is. The legislature is trying to weigh complex issues here - lowering property taxes, bettering educational outcomes although people spoke up at meeting and said it sounds like it is all about the money not about educational outcomes. Jane's view is that the Senate has a very different view on this so even though it was passed by the House (in a modified version) who knows what the bill will look like and if it will pass at all.
- c. Margaret Maclean said that it will pass this year. She is the former Peacham Elementary School Principal and was on the Vermont State Board of Education.
 - i. She said that how it looks will depend on how they reconcile the House and Senate views and how they can be influenced through that process.
 - ii. She said that last year a group of school members and community members got together and they formed an organization called "Vermonters for Schools and Communities". She gave the school board and public copies of their guiding principles and policy platform. She said that they lobbied and they have a website. If you sign up, you get regular action alerts. She said that as an organized group it is easier to make an impact. For more information, see: <http://vtschoolsrock.org/>

- iii. For more information about Margaret's testimony before the State, see:
<http://legislature.vermont.gov/assets/Documents/2016/WorkGroups/House%20Education/Bills/H.361/Witness%20testimony/H.361~Margaret%20MacLean~Testimony~2-13-2015.pdf>
- iv. Margaret said that the Senate was drafting the bill this week. She said that a number of school districts and supervisory unions have written formal resolutions about H361. She said that if Peacham wanted to have an impact, they needed to write a resolution ASAP as it won't matter after this week.
- v. Margaret said that as a community we need to make some decisions - do we want to keep a school in Peacham and what do we want to look at it?
- vi. So when you think about Peacham School, you need to think, what is going to make this school different? One way is to make a curriculum that is very different from the state. Dover is the only one that is doing the primary school program of International Baccalaureate - a k-12 program that is very vigorous and very creative with an integrative curriculum. For more information, see:
<http://www.ibo.org/en/programmes/primary-years-programme/>
- vii. Margaret said that something like that could make Peacham different enough that Peacham School could be sustainable. She said that we really need to get up to 75 students if we can, maybe 60. You can create a solid curriculum but small class sizes can make things very difficult. If you can boost your numbers that would be great and one way to do that is to offer something distinctive. You can use the program for a while before you become certified. It's vigorous.
 - 1. Mark said, that's kind of enticing. It's really something to think about.
 - 2. Judy says she has been looking into it - there is a \$4000 requirement to have a candidacy program. Parents want to make sure that the school would meet the needs of all students and is not elitist.
- viii. Margaret emphasized that the most important thing to think about is governance. Nationally, when small school districts merge with larger districts, small schools eventually close, no matter what assurances are made in the beginning. Therefore, Margaret counseled that a preK-12 school district would be disastrous for Peacham. She said that a merged supervisory union was the way to go as it would allow for Peacham to retain its governance and therefore, its school. She said that current

supervisory unions could change and she counseled that Peacham should begin discussions with Cabot and Waterford.

- ix. Mat said that the CCSU has 889 students, so we are not that far off from the 1100 number proposed by H361.
 - x. Margaret said that in the past people have talked about doing creative things with Barnet. She would caution against doing this because governance will affect those decisions. Decide on governance first, then go from there.
 - xi. Margaret said that the State is looking for financial efficiencies. She said that merged supervisory unions save through reducing superintendents and merged preK-12 school districts save through schools closing and teachers losing jobs.
 - xii. Mat said that the superintendents have been talking about what that means for us. He said there are a lot of challenges with the merged supervisory unions involving how much work is involved with teachers contacts, transportation, etc. All of these massive pieces are very complex and no one is talking about it. Mat said that he doesn't support either option.
 - xiii. Mark said that we have to increase our levels of cooperation. He said that he is pretty amazed at how the Senate bill has really watered down H361.
 - xiv. **Mark moved that the board is going to review governance resolution materials to send to the Senate, Governor, and House and write a resolution portraying values that will be signed and sent out at another meeting. Adam seconded. So moved.**
 - xv. Margaret said that 4/23 is the next CCSU meeting and that the school board might want to bring up a CCSU resolution at that meeting
- d. Jen wanted to say that she was at the last big meeting. She said that townspeople stood pretty firm that we want to have our own school and school district. She thinks it is important to find out what other people are doing but she thinks that was pretty strongly vocalized. Rose said that is why we brought our kids here. Because we like this school and we want it to stay the way it is. Jen said that she thinks that looking for school districts that want to keep their schools and have similar values would be helpful.
- i. Mark said we may have to be proactive about what our school looks like and be flexible. We have to be careful that we are not so stubborn that we end up losing the school. Please be assured that we are not making any decisions. We will have community meetings.
 - ii. Jen said that she thinks keeping the school has to be a top priority.
 - iii. Mark said that we are certainly talking about school choice for 9-12 but he doesn't know about 7-12.

4. *Board expectation of Minutes reported out and their review by the Board as advised by VSBA*

- a. Mark said that as a board member he has seen minutes prepared by other towns and that it is pretty much just decisions and large items. He thinks the minutes are way too verbose. He thinks that the expectation is that we only want to have decisions that are made recorded in the minutes. That we don't want to have conversations. He also said that the School Board has to be able to edit the minutes before they are posted. He asked for input from the other board members.
- b. Adam asked what currently happens.
- c. Melissa explained that the clerk posts unapproved minutes within 5 days of a board meeting. The school board can edit and approve minutes at the following board meeting.
- d. Mark said that he spoke to Vermont School Board Association and a lawyer and he said that the board could edit the unapproved minutes before posting. He requested that the Board receive the minutes within 2 to 3 days of a meeting.
- e. Melissa said that the board cannot edit unapproved minutes before posting. She read the following passage from <http://www.vtvsba.org/op/meetings.html>
 - i. If members of the board want to correct or supplement draft minutes, they should suggest corrections at the next duly warned board meeting. When all board members have email accounts, it saves time if board members email suggested meeting minute edits to the board clerk/secretary in advance of board adoption. This process will eliminate using valuable board meeting time to wordsmith prior meeting minutes!
- f. Mark asked Mat to have Vanessa Koch at the CCSU find out whether or not the board can edit the minutes before posting.
- g. Mark said that what happened with last month's minutes was inexcusable and that it wasted Mat's time.
- h. Melissa explained that originally, she was not sure what she was going to do about the minutes of March 9th because Mark asked her to not record anything about the possibility of the elementary school being closed and reopened as a middle school. He wanted it to be written as a general values discussion with no details. Melissa said that community members came up to her before she posted the minutes asking what was going on because in the Barnet minutes, it was written that the legislation was going to affect the future of the Peacham and Barnet schools. She explained that she could not say, yes this was discussed at the Peacham School Board meeting, but no, it is not reflected in the minutes. That would compromise her honesty and integrity. She said that she thought that what happened was very positive. She said that the community really appreciated that Mat came out and talked with them at the superintendent roundtable.

- i.* Melissa said that community members have told her that they appreciate the level of detail in the minutes. Mark interrupted her to say that it's the board's decision.
- j.* Melissa said that she was willing to do whatever the board asked of her in terms of detail. But she said that if she cannot add detail, the Board can only discuss what is on the agenda. Anything that is not on the agenda (like the discussion of the future of the school at the March 9th meeting), would need to be recorded so that community members could know that it was discussed. This way they could approach board members and ask for more information about that topic.
- k.* Mat offered to share Barnet and Walden's minutes with Melissa and the board as examples.
- l.* Rose said that she thinks the Peacham minutes are very educational. Her son is at Barnet and she does not find the Barnet minutes to be helpful at all.
- m.* Becky said that she has heard this discussion multiple times. We have gone back and forth between having too much detail and too little detail. She thinks it's best to err on the side of too much detail. She said that as a community member, it is frustrating for her to only see motions. As a board member, not having that information is often very difficult because you have to go back and refer to your own notes to see what that motion was about.
- n.* Mark said that he is all about being transparent about conversation that has to do with the decisions being made, not anything else.
- o.* Becky said that she is asking to have a little of the background. She understands that you don't need to have everything because things are taken out of context.
- p.* Jen said that she would caution against removing all detail. She agreed with what Becky said and she disagrees that it wasted people's time. She thinks it was good because it got people's attention. She said that if you remove details, the town will become suspicious. So you want to be careful to add some background detail. People want to see that. There are a lot of parents who want to be here but they can't. A lot of people were upset that this was on a vacation week and a lot of people were out of town.
- q.* Adam said that if you get to the core of the issue, it is a discussion that gets transcribed and interpreted. The minutes of March 9th were Melissa's interpretation of the meeting. He doesn't think the issue was with the details. He said that we need to be sensitive to appearing transparent.
- r.* Melissa said that Adam is right and that the minutes are skewed from her perspective, especially because she cannot record everything that is said. But she pointed out that she does not have power and the board does. The reason the board cannot edit the minutes before approval to give them a more balanced view, is because community members need to know when edits are made by Board members. The clerk is a check to the board's power.

- s. Rick said that if the board wants to be seen as transparent, Mark has to avoid saying things like wanting the minutes to be efficient. Saying efficient is interpreted as someone trying to not be transparent. He suggested that all minutes be recorded, as that is simple to do and it eliminates the problem of interpretation.
 - t. Judy said that she was on a board where we recorded the minutes and it was great. She said that then the clerk could refer back to the recording when writing the minutes and nothing could be taken out of context because we all had the thing.
5. *Administrative Reports*
- a. Business Manager Report
 - i. The heating system control panel is broken so the units are not shutting down.
 - ii. **Adam moved to authorize Mat to hire a contractor for up to \$8,000 within 10 business days. Mike seconded. So moved.**
 - iii. **Mark moved to hire Young Guns construction to insulate above the bathroom and places where there were old heaters for \$2,058. Adam seconded. So moved**
 - b. Superintendent Report
 - i. Mat said that there is a board and superintendent training coming up.
 - ii. Mark said that Harry Frank was assigned to us from the VSBA who helped us three years ago when the board was not getting along well with the community. Harry really wants to talk with us about our values around governance, etc. This would be an open meeting. Mark will send out an email with the dates he suggested in order to determine a time for the meeting.
 - c. Principal Report
 - i. Judy said that most of it has been covered already. She said that the big item is the last thing on her report - a question for the board. Will the board support the formation of a community/parent committee to develop a strategic plan. She said that the school does not have a strategic plan. She said the school does not have an action plan either because we have never needed improvement and therefore, are not required to have an action plan by the State. Judy said that anyone who wants to come can come.
 - ii. Mark asked where this was coming from. He wanted to understand how it works with our partners like CCSU. Judy said that we know that Peacham needs to be a distinctive environment for education for us to survive. We have to ask, what do you want for your kids? Are we doing enough for Peacham kids? That international baccalaureate program was one model to do that. I want the school board to know that we are having this

conversation about how do we become an excellent school. It's just a lets get talking - what do you want to see in the near and far future?

iii. Mat asked, at some point do you intend to have data drive that conversation. I think it's great to add more but i hate for things to get distracted from core content areas like math and reading (and scores). Mat said that he thinks that through that process, too, it would be important to say what do we want and what would be good for students and how do we get there.

iv. Becky said that it sounds like from Mat she hears how do we work with where are our weaknesses and how do we improve them and from Judy she hears where are our strengths and how do we build them? She would like to see a school where we look at where our strengths are and work from there. You need to aim higher. She agrees we need to look at the data and whether it is telling us at what we need to know and if not, we have to go and get that data. And if this school is going to survive - and this is a town that chose a school not a courthouse or jail over 200 years ago - then we need to focus on our strengths. Because of the issue with minutes last month we heard a lot about education and how much we support education.

v. Mat said that its not so much focusing on strengths and weaknesses as its looking at where kids are so we don't create gaps. He said you can create some problems if you don't review data and make based decisions. He said that this needs to be a two-pronged approach. Lets make some strong education decisions about what the needs of our students are.

vi. Mark said that this is what he likes about Mat. He brings a very pragmatic approach about education. You have to have it measurable and you have to have the data.

vii. Mat said that he agrees with what Judy's approach was but he thinks we need to look at the data.

viii. Judy said that the question is do you support this committee? I would think the product would be a proposal for the action plan. If you give kids a reason for loving to come to school every day then a lot of those things will happen (reading) will happen a lot easier.

d. Teacher contract negotiations -

i. Board needs to approve Wynne Browne. She is more than willing to sit in on the meetings and the VSBA approved that.

ii. Mark moved to appoint Wynne Brown as negotiations representative for the board. Adam seconded. So moved.

e. Next Meeting

i. Monday 5/11 at 5:30pm - may change to tuesdays at 5pm in June.

6. Executive Session

a. Mark moved to go into executive session for personnel and student issues at 8pm.